

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 06730 011138Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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/101 W

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R 010702Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8672
INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN
AMCONSUL KADUNA

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, NI
SUBJECT: STUDENTS: THE POT CONTINUES TO BOIL

REF: LAGOS 6483

1. SUMMARY: THE STUDENT POT CONTINUES TO BOIL WITH SOME UNIVERSITIES CLOSED, OTHERS THREATENING TO CLOSE AND SOME VIOLENCE ON CAMPUS AMONG PRO- AND ANTI-BOYCOTT STUDENTS. THE POLICE HAVE WARNED THEY ARE PREPARED TO ACT, STATING THAT NO ONE CAN ACT "AS IF THEY ARE ABOVE THE LAW OF THE LAND." COURT APPEARANCES ARE SCHEDULED FOR STUDENT LEADER OKEOWO AND STUDENT LAWYER FAWEHINMI MAY 31. THREATS OF OFF-CAMPUS VIOLENCE APPEAR TO BE ALLEVIATED SOMEWHAT BY SPLITS AMONG STUDENTS AND THE GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO HAVE THE SITUATION IN HAND FOR THE MOMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. TENSIONS HAVE CONTINUED TO MOUNT, BUT VIOLENCE IN THE LATEST ROUND OF THE STUDENT CRISIS APPEARS TO BE CONFINED TO CAMPUSES. THERE ARE NUMEROUS
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PAGE 02 LAGOS 06730 011138Z

REPORTS OF CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN PRO- AND ANTI-BOYCOTT STUDENTS. BOTH IBADAN AND BENIN HAVE BEEN CLOSED BECAUSE OF ON-CAMPUS VIOLENCE. FOLLOWING A STUDENT VOTE TO BOYCOTT CLASSES IN ILORIN, THE VICE CHANCELLOR CLOSED THE UNIVERSITY BUT CALLED FOR STUDENTS TO APPLY FOR READMISSION TO A NEW SESSION TO START JUNE 5. REPORTEDLY MAIDUGURI IS

ALSO CLOSED, BUT WE HAVE SEEN NO EXPLANATION FOR ITS CLOSURE.

3. OVER THE WEEKEND THE COMMITTEE OF VICE CHANCELLORS ISSUED AN APPEAL TO STUDENTS TO STOP THE BOYCOTT AND RESUME NORMAL ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES. THEY WARNED THAT IF STUDENTS DID NOT HEED THE APPEAL, THE UNIVERSITIES WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO CLOSE DOWN. THE VICE CHANCELLOR OF LAGOS WARNED, "IF GOOD SENSE DOES NOT HOLD THE CRISIS WILL CONTINUE INDEFINITELY."

4. THE DAILY TIMES REPORTED A STATEMENT ISSUED BY STUDENTS IN LAGOS SUPPORTING THE BOYCOTT, BY SAYING " WE ONCE AGAIN STRONGLY APPEAL TO ALL STUDENTS THROUGHOUT THE NATION TO PLEASE REFRAIN FROM ANY ACT OF VIOLENCE." THE STATEMENT ALSO RAISED RUMORS OF SOUTH AFRICAN INVOLVEMENT AGAIN, SAYING THE STUDENTS "REJECTED" AN OFFER OF "POLITICAL ASYLUM" WHICH SOUTH AFRICA HAD ALLEGEDLY MADE TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE BANNED NATIONAL UNION OF NIGERIAN STUDENTS. THE PRESIDENT OF THE NSUKKA STUDENTS UNION ALSO DESCRIBED AN ALLEGED OFFER OF ASSISTANCE FROM SOUTH AFRICA AS "DIPLOMATIC PROPAGANDA" BY SOUTH AFRICA.

5. FRIDAY, MAY 26 THE POLICE ISSUED A STATEMENT WARNING THAT "REPORTS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED OF PLANNED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LAGOS 06730 011138Z

ACTS OF INTIMIDATION, INCITEMENT, VIOLENCE, ARSON AND DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY, BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES BY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS. NO PERSON OR GROUP OF PERSONS, INCLUDING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS CAN CONTINUE TO BEHAVE IN A MANNER AS IF THEY ARE ABOVE THE LAW OF THE LAND." POLICE WERE ALSO REPORTEDLY PREPARED FOR DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH DID NOT MATERIALIZE ON MAY 30. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE POLICE HAVE EXHAUSTED THEIR SUPPLY OF TEAR GAS, WITH THE LAST RESERVES ISSUED IN ANTICIPATION OF DEMONSTRATIONS YESTERDAY. THIS RAISED THE POSSIBILITY THAT ANOTHER EXTENDED CONFRONTATION COULD RESULT IN MORE BLOODSHED IF THE POLICE LACK NON-LETHAL WEAPONS.

6. LAST FRIDAY'S POLICE STATEMENT ALSO COMMENTED ON DETAINED STUDENTS. THE POLICE SAID THEY WERE UNDER DETENTION BECAUSE OF " OTHER ACTIVITIES IN BREACH OF SECURITY AND THE LAWS OF THE LAND. INVESTIGATIONS ARE GOING ON TO ASCERTAIN IN DETAIL THE EXTENT OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF THOSE DETAINED IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AGAINST THE SECURITY OF THE

STATE. SUCH INVESTIGATIONS INCLUDE ALL FORMS OF FOREIGN CONNECTIONS, POLITICAL MANIPULATIONS AND CRIMINAL MISDEMEANOR." PRESS REPORTS ARE UNCLEAR BUT IT APPEARS THAT THE POLICE WERE NOT WILLING TO RELEASE STUDENT LEADERS AT THIS TIME EVEN IF SPECIFIC CHARGES WERE NOT MADE.

7. MEANWHILE A LAGOS JUDGE HAS ORDERED THE APPEARANCE OF STUDENT LEADER SEGUN OKEOWO IN COURT MAY 31 DESPITE POLICE PLEAS THAT HIS APPEARANCE WOULD DISTURB THE PEACE. HEARINGS ON THE CHARGES AGAINST STUDENT LAWYER GANI FAWEHINMI WERE ALSO EXPECTED TO CONTINUE MAY 31.

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PAGE 04 LAGOS 06730 011138Z

8. COMMENT: DESPITE INCREASED TENSIONS ON CAMPUS, THE APPARENT SPLIT AMONG STUDENTS APPEARS TO HAVE ALLEVIATED SOMEWHAT THE THREAT OF OFF-CAMPUS VIOLENCE. AFTER VISIT TO UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS, EMBOFF CONFIRMED NEWSPAPER REPORTS OF STRONG DESIRE AMONG MANY STUDENTS TO RETURN TO NORMAL CLASSES. WITH KEY STUDENT LEADERS IN JAIL, THE RADICAL ELEMENT ON CAMPUS APPEARS TO BE LESS SUCCESSFUL IN MOVING THE MAIN BODY OF STUDENTS TO DEMONSTRATIONS. OFF-CAMPUS EVENTS, SUCH AS THE COURT APPEARANCE OF OKEOWO, COULD SPARK VIOLENCE, BUT THE GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO HAVE THE SITUATION IN HAND FOR THE MOMENT.
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